

## Sensory Processing

**Sensory processing difficulties are a key issue for many students with an ASD. It is vital to consider the possible impact of this and how to address these issues.**

### What is it Sensory Processing Disorder?

Sensory Processing Disorder or SPD (also referred to as Sensory Integration Disorder or Sensory Integration Dysfunction) is a neurological disorder causing difficulties with taking in, processing and responding to sensory information from the environment and within your own body (visual, auditory, tactile, olfaction, gustatory, vestibular and proprioception). This can be Hypo Reactive or Hyper Reactive. For example: one child may show no sign of pain when they hurt themselves whilst another slightest touch can cause pain.

### People with an ASD tell us about their sensory difficulties

Temple Grandin (in her autobiography) writes:  
*“Ordinary clothes itched and scratched. Behaviour Problems could have been avoided by simple clothing modifications.”*  
*“My eyes are sensitive to light, and I squint.”*  
*“Although my hearing was normal, noises overwhelmed me. I covered my ears to block out sounds.”*

### How does it affect learning?

For those with SPD, sensory information may be sensed and perceived in a way that is different from most other people. Unlike blindness or deafness, sensory information can be received by people with SPD, **the difference** is that information is often registered, interpreted and processed differently by the brain. SPD can affect not only how they move and learn, but also how they behave, how they play and make friends, and especially how they feel about themselves.

A Typical Child	A Child with SPD
Matt sits at his table, upright and reads the worksheet instructions. He understands them, picks up a pencil and connects the dots.	Jack sits slumped at his table. He twists on the chair, trying to get comfortable so he can read. He cocks his head this way and that. The words dance on the page.

### Why undertake sensory programmes?

As stated above, SPD can have a huge impact on learning and behavior. By creating an appropriate sensory programme you can reduce fears, confusion and distress and provide long term change.

### What to do?

Usually Occupational Therapists (OT) undertake specific sensory assessments and programmes for children with an ASD. However in my experience not everyone has access to an OT, and even if the child is having therapy these activities need to be followed up at home and school.

The great news is sensory integration activities are unbelievably fun and a necessary part of development for *any child*, whether they have a sensory processing disorder or not.

## 10 Sensory Activities for EVERYONE

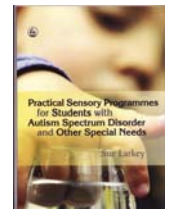
1. Play dough: hide objects or little wobbly eyes in the dough and get the kids to find.
2. Put on shoes and socks; find big ones that are easy to put on at first.
3. Chinese Whispers: just start with one word.
4. Play with toys which have sounds, vibrate or light up.
5. Marble works.
6. Pop-up books.
7. Target games.
8. Bean bag activities: throwing, catching, carrying etc.
9. Mirror activities: dress up, make faces.
10. Put out a range of textures on the ground: sand, bubble wrap, carpet, foam pieces etc. Start with shoes on then take off shoes and socks! Or even crawl over.

## Great resources to support your sensory programmes

### **Practical Sensory Programmes:** By Sue Larkey

Designed for families and schools to incorporate sensory activities into the home and school in order to address the significant difficulties students with an ASD often encounter. It shows how to identify sensory problems and develop programmes. Over 100 activities including all five senses and movement.

CODE B05 \$45 (incl P & H)



### **The Out-of-Sync Child:** By Carol Stock Kranowitz

#### **Recognising and coping with sensory processing disorder**

The revised edition of the ground-breaking 1998 book that introduced Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) to parents, teachers, and other non-specialists. This new edition features additional information on visual and hearing deficits, motor skill difficulties, ADHD, autism, Asperger syndrome, and other related disorders.

CODE B42 \$40 (incl P & H)

